



GOVERNOR'S ARIZONA READY EDUCATION COUNCIL MINUTES

**General Meeting – January 23, 2014
10:00 A.M.**

Location: 1700 W. Washington
3rd Floor Conference Room
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Members Present: Dr. Craig Barrett, Tim Carter (telephonic), Pearl Esau, Dr. Rufus Glasper, Glen Hamer, Brad Holaway, Superintendent John Huppenthal, Eileen Klein, Jake Logan, Amanda McAdams, Diane McCarthy, Colleen Niccum, Tom Tyree, Merl Waschler, Sandra Watson, and Dr. Jim Zaharis.

Members Absent: Rep. Jeff Dial (ex-officio), Rep. Doris Goodale (ex-officio), Jacob Moore, Kathy Player, Onnie Shekerjian, and Sen. Kimberly Yee (ex-officio).

Staff Present: Rebecca Gau and Dale Frost

Call to Order, Welcome & Introductions

Dr. Craig Barrett called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. and introduced the purpose of the meeting, which was to hold a discussion regarding Closing the Achievement Gap Best Practices, receive an report on the A for Arizona Initiative, and receive updates on GOEI and the Budget.

Dr. Barrett called for an approval of the Dec 11th, 2013 Council meeting minutes as presented. Diane McCarthy motioned for this approval, and Dr. Jim Zaharis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion: Closing the Achievement Gap Best Practices

Rebecca Gau with the Governor's Office of Education Innovation (GOEI) informed the Council that that research into the achievement gap in math has been conducted and that some of the best known and most successful organizations in Arizona have been brought into the conversation about closing this achievement gap. These organizations include Rodel Foundation, Teach for America, Charter Schools Associations, and Beat the Odds. Ms. Gau also passed along suggestions and ideas that the Council had come up with during the January meeting. The three points made by the Council that stuck out the most were: The importance of quality teachers, the studying of highly performing schools (with respect to the achievement gap issue), and emphasis on student growth and accountability.

The point was made that the negative aspects of the student achievement gap predictions only hold true if nothing changes in Arizona. Ms. Gau reminded the Council, however, that there are a lot of positive changes taking place in the state and thus it is likely that the gap may not be as large as previously thought – as long as positive changes continue to happen.

The idea of adding additional time in school and what that would mean also was discussed. The proposed 7th period should not be used to continue teaching basic skills, but to nurture confidence, creativity, and a sense of community while also providing an established time period (during school – as opposed to after school) where struggling students can work and get help on whatever they are having trouble with. This period can also be employed by teachers as a professional development and preparation period.

Report: A for Arizona Initiative

Lisa Keegan presented the Council with information regarding the A for Arizona Initiative. Ms. Keegan explained that “A” schools meet or exceed standards in math, reading, and writing tests, and this grade is achievable regardless of local community economies, and that the initiative focuses on getting all schools in Arizona to achieve this grade.

Right now, Arizona has about 2022 schools, 499 with a grade of “A” – and these 499 schools service 250,000 students.

Ms. Keegan suggested that Arizona can get to “A” in three ways:

- 1) Expanding or Replicating “A” schools
- 2) Opening new “A” schools, local or recruited
- 3) Improving existing schools

Conversely, we delay our growth to “A” by:

- 1) Ignoring success
- 2) Allowing C, D, or F schools to expand or replicate
- 3) Allowing C, D, or F systems to build new schools

Superintendent John Huppenthal voiced his opinion that the letter grade system has its flaws, and that there are some communities that cannot be held to the same standards as others, due to factors such as cultural differences.

Update: GOEI

Ms. Gau updated the Council on GOEI, including projects that are currently being worked and their current statuses. Ms. Gau the importance of the dress rehearsal for the broadband initiative as she emphasized in the following example: One particular school was setting up their computers and discovered that they did not even have enough electrical outlets to power all of them. These are the types of things that are easily overlooked and highlight how helpful this dress rehearsal is turning out to be.

Ms. Gau also informed the Council that Phil Brown, who was contracted by LeCroy & Milligan, has begun work on a report that aims to support the longevity of the Graduation Rate Task Force’s work. Mr. Brown has met with the Task Force and is in the beginning phases of collecting information and contacted Task Force members individually.

Aaron Sandeen with the Arizona Department of Administration informed the Council that he has been working on the broadband project and grant for over two years now, and that part of that process involved gathering data from across the state on what types of internet connections are currently available/being used (if any), what facilities require to connect/upgrade their connection, costs associated with each factor, and so on. The program has begun to work closely with GOEI and has developed a focus on education, as one of Governor Brewer's cornerstones is education reform.

Mr. Sandeen compared the status of Arizona to that of Utah:

- Utah spends \$19.6 million for statewide transport bandwidth and Internet access for about 800,000 k-20 students, or \$24.38 per student/year - and boasts of having a 1 Gbps connection.
- Arizona spends \$22.1 million for Internet access for 1,100,000 k-20 students, or 19.42 per student/year - but has only a 12 Mbps connection.

Ms. Gau returned to the podium to present the Council with an update on the Public Opinion Poll, as part of the November omnibus survey data. She informed the Council that awareness of Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards (AZCCRS) has been slowly increasing, with the largest change seen among parent Democrats whose incomes are less than \$75k. Other statistics on the data were also supplied, and overall the data suggest a generally favorable public view of the Standards.

Additionally, Ms. Gau updated the Council on the Teacher Survey data. Highlights included the fact that 1 out of 4 teachers report having received no training on the implementation of AZCCRS, which is significant because as previously reported, those who have received training are much more likely to be both confident in and support the new Standards.

Update: Budget

Dale Frost with the Governor's Office presented the Council with an update on Arizona Ready's budget.

New investments for K-12 include:

- Inflation funding
- Student success funding
- Charter school reforms
- New state assessment
- ADE data system
- IT certification programs
- K-12 broadband strategy

New investments for higher education include:

- Parity funding (universities)
- UA cooperative extension (universities)
- UA research partnership with TGEN (universities)
- Rural workforce development (community colleges)

Council Comments

Dr. Barrett reviewed possible agenda topics for the December meeting and also announced the dates of future Council meetings, which are March 5, and April 17.

Jake Logan announced that this would be his last day as a member of the Council, and Janna Day will be replacing him.

Public Comments

Nell Pederson with the Arizona Education Association expressed her disquiet with billion-dollar budget cuts made to the operational funding of public schools. Ms. Pederson comments that these cuts have led to increasing class sizes, school closures, and cuts to head-start, physical education, and music classes, in addition to many other programs that provide teacher, student, and parent support. Ms. Pederson informed the Council that if one were to Google search the term “AEA Common Core Toolkit,” you will find a document that 50 teachers from around the country collaborated to create. This toolkit provides an overview and explanation of the Standards, tips on how to implement them to fit different class types, and more.

Brian Bunkers, a Parent Ambassador, suggested to the Council that Arizona needs to get great teachers more involved in the training of new teachers. Mr. Bunkers also informed the Council that he will be going to many PTOs in the future and that he would like to be kept up to date with information from the Council so that he can update others on information provided by Arizona Ready. Mr. Bunkers then noted his opinion that all students should be on a level playing field, and he does not feel that the small school waiting system is the way to go (with specific regard to charter school reform).

Adjourn

With no further business before the Council, Dr. Zaharis motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was then declared adjourned by Dr. Barrett.